

FREEDOM

anarchist fortnightly

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30th October 1999

50p

Safety concerns on the railways as thirty lives lost in the Paddington train crash ...

MURDER

On Tuesday 5th October, two trains collided head-on, just outside Paddington Station. Thirty people died and over 250 were injured.

The causes of the tragedy were apparent almost immediately. One of the drivers, on leaving Paddington, had passed a signal, SN 109, on red. Both

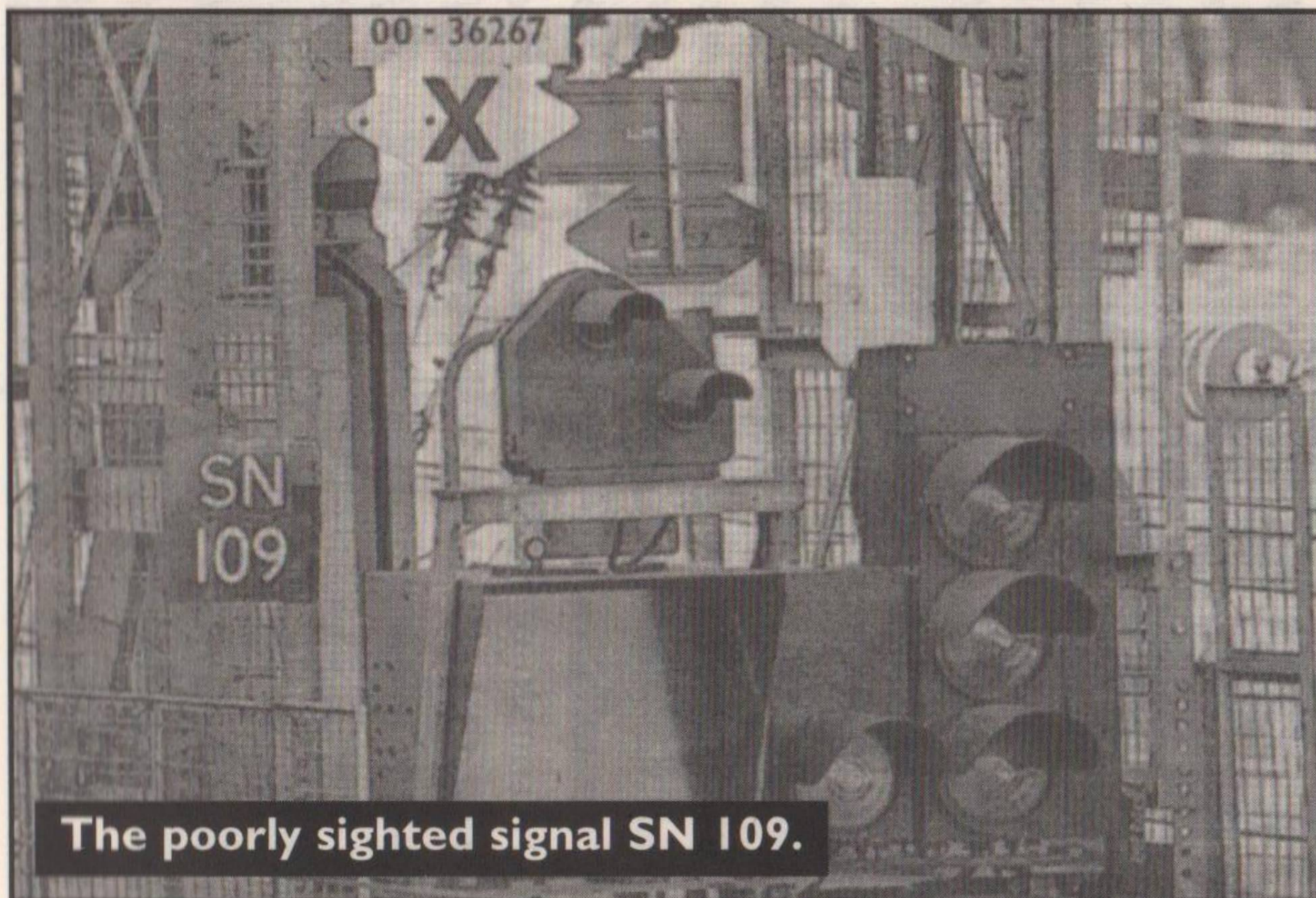
of life in such clearly avoidable circumstances.

It is unquestionably the case that the Paddington disaster could have been avoided. The technology for modern, fail-safe, computerised train safety systems exists. It is known as Automatic Train Protection (ATP). Most trains in Europe have it, as do Eurostar and the

Heathrow Express. In the aftermath of the Clapham rail disaster in 1988, British Rail publicly expressed its commitment to a 'gospel' of 'absolute safety'. On privatisation, this commitment

was abandoned. According to Louise Christian, lead solicitor for the steering committee representing the victims of the Southall crash, "companies such as Railtrack and Great Western trains began to talk about cost benefit analysis and the value of saving a life. They put the value of a human life at not more than £2.76 million and said they were not prepared to afford the cost they calculated as being at £14 million per life of installing ATP. They calculated that about three people per year would die in train collisions preventable by ATP but agreed amongst themselves that the cost of preventing this was too high".

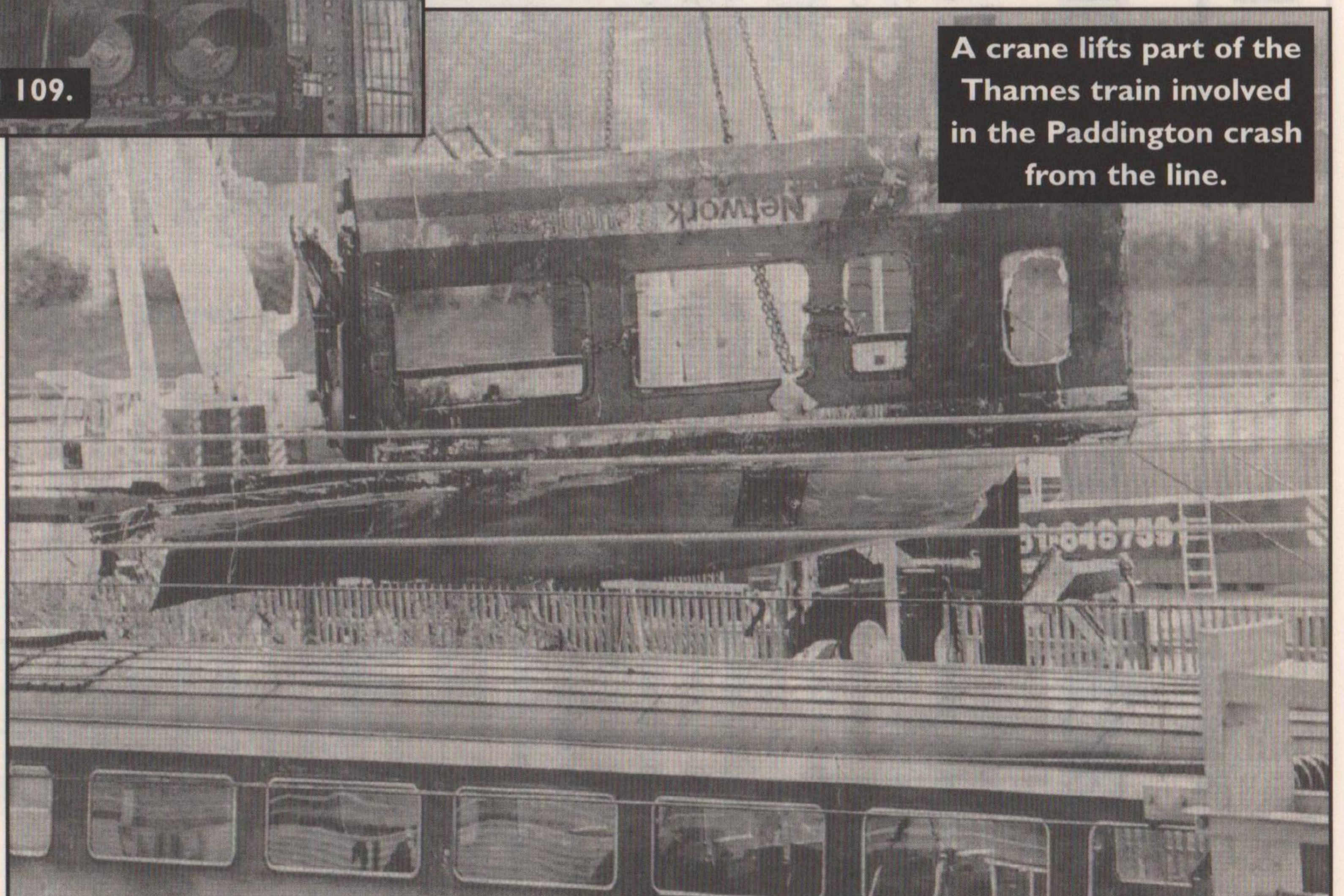
A memorandum sent to the Railtrack board in February 1995 warned that the
(continued on page 3)



The poorly sighted signal SN 109.

the train drivers' union ASLEF and the train operators had complained to Railtrack on countless occasions that the signal was poorly sighted and, as such, prone to 'phantom aspect' (sun-blindness in the cab, making the signal almost invisible). Railtrack had failed to take any action to make the signal safe. Drivers pass signals at red at a rate of two a day – usually because of poor sighting.

A public inquiry has been launched. Sickeningly another inquiry – into the Southall crash, already under-way – was intended to prevent further loss



A crane lifts part of the Thames train involved in the Paddington crash from the line.

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Pakistan coup: a 'tragic political tradition'

A soldier on guard in Pakistan



Military take-overs tend to be a touchy topic for anarchists. After all, the events of Spain in 1936 were not a *coup d'état* by a political party but a military sedition abetted by the intervention of foreign powers. Consequently libertarians will be troubled when the army generals take power, wherever it is and however squalid or corrupt the civilian government overthrown – as in Pakistan.

No one can feel easy about a civilian democracy being replaced by military rulers, but to call the regime of the ousted Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, a "dysfunctional democracy" as one reporter did last week, would seem a bit generous.

After the enactment of martial law in 1977 one academic, William E. Richter, wrote: "Pakistani political parties have historically been weak; elections, when not avoided altogether, have been preludes to disaster; succession has generally come about through mass agitation and military takeover rather than through the ballot box". This, Richter claimed, was Pakistan's "tragic political tradition" and was likely to continue.

Last week Zafar Khan, the head of diplomatic affairs for the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), told *Freedom* that "democratically elected leaders in Pakistan quickly drift into dictatorship". He asserted that "in Pakistan politicians get elected and then start protecting their rule – people have lost confidence in this kind of democracy".

Because of this 'tragic political tradition' perhaps, the military coup seems to have been, if not welcomed, acquiesced to on the streets. Nawaz Sharif, the ousted Prime Minister, according to *The Asian Age*, "could face charges on the capital offence of high treason". He is reported to have tried to kill army chief General Pervez Musharraf by refusing to allow the general's passenger jet to land while circling, low on fuel, with 268 passengers on board.

Years of 'nepotism and mismanagement'
Nawaz Sharif was elected in February 1997 with a massive mandate – a majority of 83 seats out of a total of 217. He quickly undermined all other institutions that might challenge

him: the opposition parties, the press and the supreme court. This month he took on the army when he sacked General Musharraf – and now reportedly tried to kill him.

The murder attempt on the General is not so incredible when one considers how he tackled the judiciary. In November 1997, criminals from Lahore were paid by senior officials in the Pakistan Muslim League (Sharif's party) to recruit a mob to storm the supreme court. Jason Burke in *The Observer* wrote: "The judiciary, unsurprisingly, took the hint".

In 1988, after General Zia, the then head of state, died in a plane crash, Louise Nicholson the travel writer said that "Pakistan returned to democratic rule but then, as now, it is one which is feudal in its operations and still revolves around the twelve great families". The result has not been inspiring. Professor Akbar Ahmed writes that "over the past decade, nepotism and mismanagement – the very things that Mohammed Ali Jinnah, Pakistan's founding father, warned against – have become commonplace".

When in September 1988, *The Observer* reported that Nawaz Sharif owned millions of pounds worth of property in the UK, in Islamabad a car-full of heavies was sent round to the *Observer* correspondent's home. Last week *The Asian Age* claimed that "deposed Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, whose personal fortune is estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars, paid no income tax last year and filed a deficit wealth tax return".

The Asian Age insists corrupt activities of successive civilian governments has been a factor in the favourable public response to the military takeover. The trouble is that no ruler in Pakistan, either civilian or military, has ever given up power voluntarily.

Guerrilla war in Kashmir

The other issue in the loss of confidence in the Sharif regime could be his decision to tell the Pakistani freedom fighters to pull out of Indian Kashmir in July 1999. Zafar Khan, as a leading militant fighting with the JKLF for the liberation of Kashmir from Indian rule, thinks this was crucial. He told *Freedom*: "coming out was one of the major factors which humiliated the Pakistani people and left resentment in the army".

Mark Tully claims the new leader of Pakistan, General Musharraf, "is believed to have sold the Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, the idea of sending Pakistani soldiers and Islamic militants trained by the army across the line of control in Kashmir to occupy the mountains above the town of Kargil". Many Pakistanis believe the withdrawal was dictated by the USA. Zafar Khan told me that Sharif went to the USA during the Kargil incident, and he said that "Pakistan has always been a servant of US interests in Asia".

The guerrilla war in Kashmir, fought by Mr Khan's JKLF and other groups seeking an independent Kashmir, has been going on since 1990. Mark Tully, an expert in Indian politics, thinks there is scope to step up this struggle. India has given the impression it has got control of the situation recently.

But to do this it has had to keep a massive military presence in Kashmir. Professor Akbar Ahmed claims that India has "almost a million paramilitary troops in Kashmir brutalising the civil population".

The total population of Kashmir is thirteen million. Pakistan's population is 150 million and that of India one billion. Consequently India is seen as the bully on the block in the sub-continent, just as elsewhere in Asia, in Tibet for example, China is viewed as the bully.

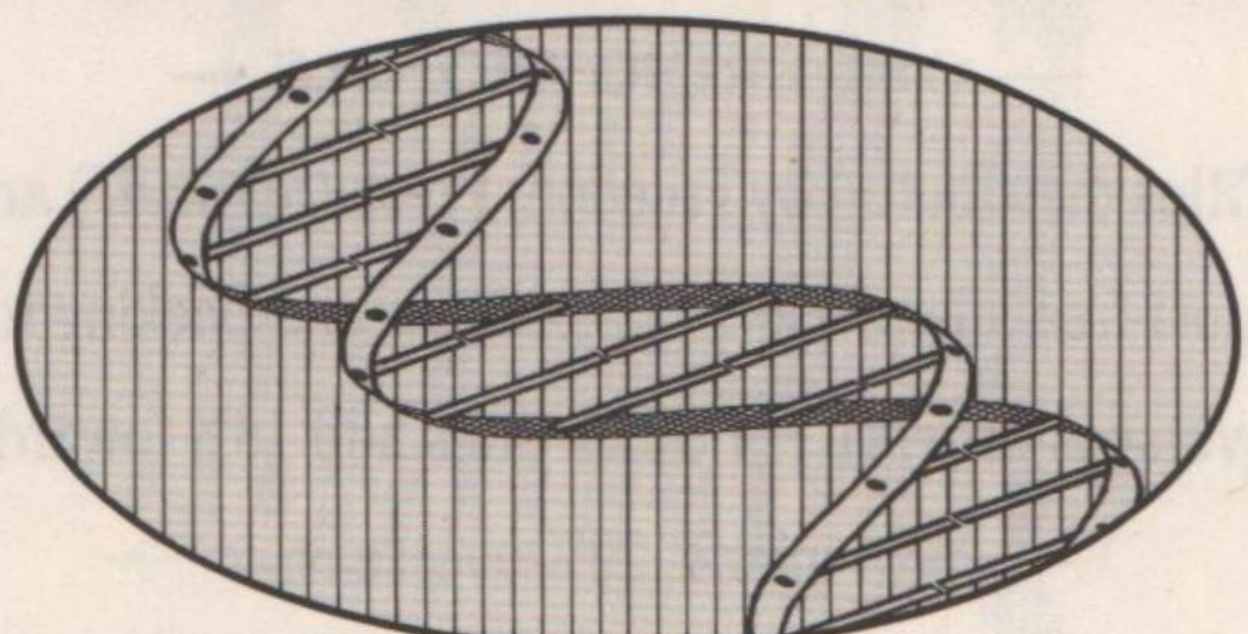
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Number 40 of the anarchist quarterly

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Cops in the US have complained that pepper sprays are ineffective against people who are used to eating very hot food. This is a vital piece of information in the struggle against capitalism – anarchists everywhere are including curry powder, chillies and tabasco sauce in all their recipes.

(source: *Resistance*, October 1999)

Waiting for Karl

Karl Max Kreuger (1946-1999)

He's about 50 and wears glasses. Behind the glasses, his bright eyes, full of life look wisely at the world, life, and all living beings. He squints a little, as if to concentrate. Perhaps to distinguish evil from good, true from false, real from fake, words from deeds. His old cap cannot keep in all of his fine, long, white hair. He speaks calmly, without raising his voice. A smile, both optimistic and mischievous, never leaves his lips. At times he loves to laugh by saying something witty. He wears an old jacket and is often seen in sweat pants. The purse that he carries on his waist is usually empty or full of change. The T-shirts under his old jacket bear anarchist or anti-militarist messages and wherever he goes he takes along extra T-shirts to give away freely.

He is a regular of the annual Anarchist Bookfair in London that takes place in the beginning of October. He leaves Holland the night before and is at the Bookfair at Conway Hall early the next morning. He visits every bookstand, reads all the pamphlets and manifestos attentively, and stuffs them into his bag. He spots the book that he would like to buy, but doesn't buy until the evening before the Bookfair closes. He stays there all day. Standing, he chats with comrades from

different parts of the world, exchanging information, giving them the addresses of the persons with whom he has contacts as well as those of organisations and activities organised to provide help for various causes. Apparently he had taken upon himself this task all by himself. The A-infos that he publishes several times a year serves the same purpose. He wants anarchists and those against the system all over the world to establish contacts, communicate, and share their experiences. He values the anarchist and radical struggle globally as much as locally. From Japan to Turkey, Greece to Belgium, France to Argentina, Mexico to Angola he would know where the events and struggles are taking place, and where comrades are treated with cruelty in prisons. He communicates with comrades whose faces he may have never seen and sends them information coming from other places.

He's been an anarchist ever since his youth in the '60s. Since then he has been serving the anarchist cause with a great deal of modesty. He's perpetually unemployed, yet has little time for himself. He does not serve points of view expressed by different groups in the anarchist movement in order to side with one or another. He is a pluralist but not



Karl Kreuger

a liberal. He takes a definite stand against those who claim that anarchism falls within liberal thought. He supports all who struggle. He does not place conflict of ideas above struggle. This does not mean that he considers ideas unimportant. In discussions he is principled but not sectarian. He clearly states his point of view.

His friendship puts you at ease. He fraternises as an individual, on a one to one basis. He accepts, on stressing their positive qualities, human beings as they are. He neither denigrates nor attaches more

importance than necessary to anyone. He is a free and responsible human being. He is conscious of being a speck of dust in the universe and a giant in stating his mind.

Our comrades in Holland have let us know that he will not be with us at this or any future Bookfairs.

Nonetheless, our eyes are fixed at the entrance waiting for Karl, with his cap on his head and a smile full of life on his face, to walk in at any moment through the door of Conway Hall decked with black and red streamers.

5th May Group

— OBITUARY —

Renzo Vanni

Born in Asciano Pisano in 1923, Renzo Vanni as a youth took part in the Communist Party controlled resistance against Mussolini. A teacher of French literature, he was very active on the cultural scene in the city of Pisa. After the Hungarian Uprising of 1956 he began to distance himself from the Communist Party and joined the anarchist movement. From 1965 to 1973 he was intensely active in the Federazione Anarchica Pisana (Pisan Anarchist Federation) then in the Gruppi di Iniziativa Anarchica (a split from the Italian Anarchist Federation founded in 1965) as an organiser of conferences and as a journalist. He was very active on the editorial board of *L'Internazionale*, journal of the GIA, then on that of the journal *Il Seme Anarchico*, above all for his notable series on the Resistance. He wrote a number of books among which *La Resistenza dalla Maremma alle Apuane*, on the Resistance, as well as a Resistance novel *Un mare di foglie* about the resistance groups in the Pisan hills. Afflicted with an incurable disease, he gradually retired from public life cutting down on his activity with the movement, dying on 21st May 1999.

Nick Heath

— OBITUARY —

Henri Bouyé

If anyone was responsible for rebuilding and restoring the French anarchist movement after the Nazi occupation, it was Henri Bouyé. Born 18th October 1912 at Mornac sur Seudre in the Charente Maritime, he was the youngest of twelve children of a Protestant family. His father died shortly after he was born. One of his aunts brought him up. At the age of 12 he was placed in a community at Etaules, his studies being supervised by a preceptor. He learnt to play violin and piano, mastered the Morse system and trained as a florist.

In 1928 he started work in the flower trade. At the age of 16 he led a strike, acting as the spokesperson for the workforce. Around 1930 he began to frequent the anarchist movement, reading the paper *Le Libertaire*, and abandoning religion. He joined the Federation Anarchiste when it was set up in 1933. He was co-founder of the paper *Terre Libre* in 1934. In 1936

during the Popular Front agitation he led another strike in Paris. A union was set up in the workplace and he also founded the florists union as a section of the CGT union. With the end of the social unrest he was sacked.

In 1939 he was called up and managed to be discharged on health grounds. Under the occupation he went underground under the alias of Henri Duval. In Paris on the Avenue de la République, he set up a florist shop run by his companion. The comings and goings of customers were a good cover for underground activities. Despite several visits from the Gestapo, the underground work remained undetected. In the cellar was equipment to manufacture false papers, and it served as a hideout for people about to be passed over the border, mostly to Spain. Scores of Jews had their lives saved by the Bouyé network.

The anarchist movement was also underground and Henri maintained the Paris liaison and its contact with other liaisons in the rest of France, above all in the Midi and South West. The florist union office was used as a meeting place, on several occasions. In 1943 anarchists of Paris and its suburbs met in secret in the forest of Montmorency under the cover of a country walk arranged by a non-existent naturist club. Henri was a real power-house in setting up the networks, above all in developing the contacts with the rest of France and setting up the Federation *Libertaire Unifiée* (United Libertarian Federation). He travelled at great risk under false papers through the Midi, meeting the Russian anarchist Voline in hiding in Marseilles. He also journeyed to Spain to establish contacts with the Spanish anarchist underground. Leaflets and manifestos were produced and a Manifesto of the Federation – prepared by Henri – called for revolutionary action based on internationalism. A duplicated internal bulletin *Le Lien* (The Link) was also produced. A leaflet and poster were distributed and flyposted massively under the

Federation Anarchiste emblem as the Germans were still leaving Paris.

As secretary of the Federation he prepared for the October 1945 Conference at Paris which put the organisation on a firm footing. He remained on the secretariat until the Dijon conference in September 1945. He actively worked for the reappearance of *Le Libertaire*, obtaining the hard-to-get paper for the first issue.

Up to 1947 he was the pivotal point in the Federation Anarchiste. Political differences made him quit the National Committee in November 1947. He also had employment problems. It was his disagreement with the tendency in the FA around Georges Fontenis that made him leave the organisation in 1952, which transformed itself into the Federation Communiste Libertaire. Others who had left or were expelled from the FA/FCL set up a new Federation Anarchiste in 1953, but Bouyé had personal disagreements with some of them (above all Maurice Joyeux) and abstained from this new initiative. By 1956 the FCL had collapsed and with it *Le Libertaire*.

In 1967, with Andre Senez, he founded the Union Federal Anarchiste, composed of three or four groups, based mostly in Western France. This produced a newspaper *Le Libertaire* which ran for ten issues up to 1972, when the UFA disappeared.

In October 1991, with the Val de Loire anarchist group, he decided to join the Federation Anarchiste, contributing articles to its weekly newspaper *Le Monde Libertaire*. He made an impressive contribution to the conference on one hundred years of the libertarian press in 1996. His last appearance at a conference of the Federation Anarchiste was in 1997.

After seventy years of anarchist activity, Henri Bouyé, died on 9th September at the age of 87 years and eleven months

Nick Heath

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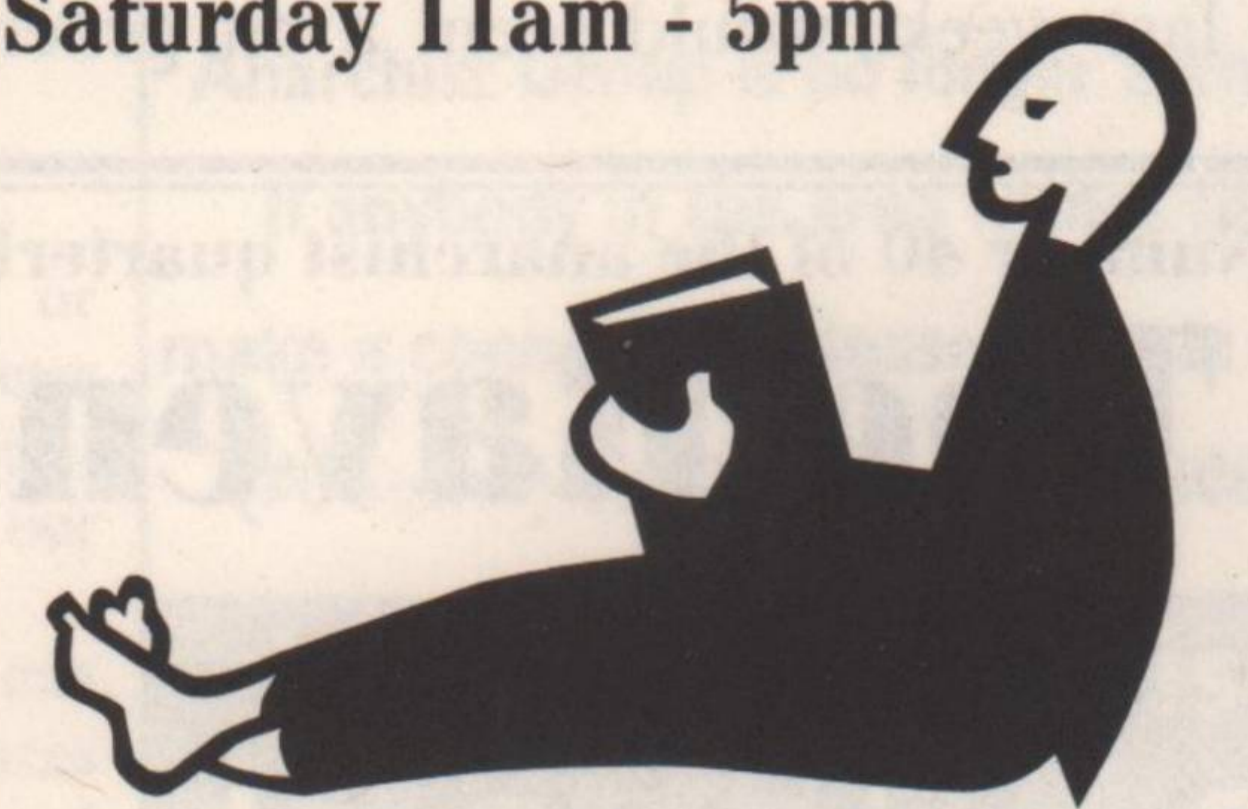
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— COPY DEADLINE —

The next issue of Freedom will be dated 13th November, and the last day for copy intended for this issue will be first post on Thursday 4th November.



If possible contributions should be typed using double-spacing between lines, or can be sent as text files on disc (with a print-out please).

(continued from page 8)

cost of installing ATP would affect Railtrack's share values on flotation. Railtrack wrote to the then transport secretary, insisting that the costs of ATP were too high.

The train operators and the government, after Southall and even now after Paddington, have continued to pursue cheaper options. John Prescott has announced that a less effective (and less expensive) system, the Train Protection Warning System (TPWS), will be introduced on all trains by 2004. TPWS is outdated, and does not work on trains travelling at more than 70 mph. TPWS would not have prevented the Paddington disaster. Nevertheless, Railtrack and Great Western have told the Southall inquiry that they propose to strip ATP from those trains equipped with it, and replace it with TPWS!

Railtrack and the train operators have, clearly, costed out the price of a life and decided that a fixed number of deaths per year is a necessary sacrifice to keep their shareholders content. Railtrack's share price on flotation in 1996 was £3.60. On the Friday before the crash it stood at £12.58. In 1998 the entire privatised rail industry made pre-tax profits of £1.1 billion – a 20% return on the previous year. Meanwhile, according to a recent independent report by consultants Booz-Allen for the rail regulator, Tom Winsor, Railtrack's infrastructure is now worse than it was before privatisation.

The rail industry receives £1.2 billion in subsidies a year. Firstgroup, which owns Great Western, made £9.3 million in profit last year. Go-Ahead, which owns Thameslink, made £11 million. Railtrack's chairman, Sir Philip Beck, earns £180,000 a year for a two-day week. Christopher Leah, the operations director of Railtrack, gets £63,000. Railtrack's director of safety standards, Roderick Muttram, earns £123,000 and last year accrued a £25,000 bonus! Railtrack's chief executive Gerald Corbett has a basic salary of £335,000 and last year took home a bonus of £61,000.

Alexander Berkman once described existence under capitalism as "an unreasoning wild dance around the golden calf, a mad worship of God Mammon". The directors of Railtrack and their counterparts in the train operating companies have offered up another thirty lives in their 'mad worship'! Those who died at Paddington lost their lives so that others might profit. They died to keep Railtrack's shareholders rich.

Nick S.

The state of Britain's trade unions today ...

Dazed and confused

Nobody symbolises the mess British trade unionism is in than poor old Ken – oops, sorry! Sir Ken Jackson of the AEEU. There he was a month ago by the seaside at the TUC calling for the annual meeting of affiliated unions to be scrapped and replaced by a gathering with the bosses' union – the CBI. Now there are many reasons I can think of for scrapping the TUC, but getting together with the CBI ... No sooner had Sir Ken called for a cosying up between the unions and bosses than the very next day his members at Fords walked out on unofficial action. Worse was to come for Sir Ken. Next AEEU members in London struck for an increase in pay. Sir Ken called them "bloody stupid". They got a 50% increase in pay over two years, which does not sound so stupid to me! The following week Fords Dagenham was hit again by wildcat strikes (no they have not yet been consigned to the Museum of Labour History) in response to discrimination, racism and bullying at the plant. Sir Ken, who had earlier called for 'a strike free Britain', was forced to appear on Radio 4 supporting his members at Fords, who last week agreed to a formal ballot on industrial action. Asked, by the BBC, what had happened to his vision of a strike free Britain where the unions and bosses work together in partnership, Sir Ken stated that partners must be equal. Well, perhaps Sir Ken should get out a bit more and talk to his members. Then maybe he would find out that the world of work is not equal – far from it.

According to an ICM Research survey published on 2nd September "workers are being driven to drink and illness by overwork, tougher targets and deadlines". 43% of workers work twelve or more hours a day, according to ICM. That well known radical organisation, the Royal College of Psychiatrists reports that stress and pressure of work is helping to tip a third of all employees every year into depression or other mental illness problems. Finally the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's national research published at the end of September found according to *The Guardian* that "health, family relationships and the long-

term future of the economy are all being put at risk as staff are forced to work harder and fear that they will pay the price of the constant search to improve competitiveness".

This is not anarchist propaganda. This is the reality of work. A decline in unionisation and workers' rights since 1979 has opened the way for employers, on the back of job insecurity and the threat of globalisation, to introduce lean production techniques, longer hours of work, more intensive production processes and multi-skilling. Staffing levels are now the second biggest reason workers take industrial action.

Faced with growing exploitation most trade union general secretaries and TUC boss John Monks have retreated, like poor old Sir Ken, into social partnership. Monks has called for an end to "militant trade unionism". In its place

he sees the need for unions and bosses to work together to 'solve problems, add value and shape change'. Forget the class war comrades – the historic role of the working class is to 'add value'! No doubt this was the problem with the Liverpool dockers, Tameside care workers, Sky chef strikers and Hillingdon workers – they did not add enough value.

Partnership means retreat and concessions, collaboration, sweat heart deals and business unionism. The much heralded partnership agreement at Tesco's has, for example, meant the loss of Sunday premium rates for workers.

Is the future of British trade unionism symbolised by the Ford workers who faced with bullying and harassment confronted their bosses, or Sir Ken who wants to get into bed with them?

Richard Griffin

The eighteenth Anarchist Bookfair

The annual Anarchist Bookfair at the Conway Hall in London on Saturday 16th October was held on a fine day under a clear blue sky after a year in which we have scarcely seen the sun, and perhaps the weather helped to put everyone in a good mood. Everyone arriving at the entrance was handed a printed programme with a Clifford Harper cover design, financed by exhibitors' advertising, and containing a list of events arranged by place and time and a map of the hall, a necessity for anyone wanting to plan their day since so many events were happening simultaneously. Entrance to the bookfair was free of charge, but those of us who stood there rattling buckets inviting donations – and all of us stallholders had to do our hour's stint – were agreeably surprised by the generosity of all those coming in. Every penny or pound donated went directly to the costs of hiring the hall.

The stalls started in the lobby – where the

information point, food counter and bar also were – and continued all around the main hall, with Freedom Press occupying its usual three tables to the right of the main door. From the start at ten o'clock in the morning, the three or four volunteers concentrated on book sales, and this continued without a break until late in the afternoon, so that none of us had the opportunity of attending the many side-shows. However, such reports as we've had suggest that each event was packed, sometimes with people unable to get into the rooms.

There was generally agreed to be a good atmosphere. The Freedom Press stall had a record turnover, and many old friends came by to greet us. The only sad note was learning, from a leaflet, of the death of our old friend Karl Kreuger, and as we think his face would have been familiar to many of our readers we are reprinting his obituary on page 2 of this issue of *Freedom*.



Film and the Anarchist Imagination

Film and the Anarchist Imagination

by Richard Porton

published by Verso, 314 pages, paperback, £13.00

Richard Porton's book is intended as "an authoritative, alternative account of films featuring anarchist characters and motives". As such, it has much to recommend it, but, interesting and provocative though it is, it does not succeed entirely.

Porton's attitude to anarchism is refreshing. He defends the anarchist record of "working



class self activity" and reports approvingly Victor Serge's comment (from *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*) that "Anarchism swept us away completely because it demanded everything of us and offered everything to us. There was no remote corner of life that it failed to illumine". The opening chapters of the book detail the stereotypes of anarchists which "permeate both Hollywood fluff and European art cinema". He launches a stout and often amusing defence of the anarchist left, against the notion that anarchism is reducible to "assassination bomb-throwing and violence". Porton notes Robert Baker's film *The Siege of Sidney Street* (1960) as typical, being a fictionalisation of the 1911 shoot-out between emigre bank robbers (almost certainly not anarchists at all, as he rightly notes) and the police. Peter the Painter, the gang's leader, "played with sinister relish by Peter Wyngarde, combines the dissolute bohemianism and impulsive violence that constitute the classic stereotype of the wild anarchist".

Sadly, as Porton observes, attempts by those sympathetic to the anarchist cause to rebut the stereotype have too often countered the negative representation with a gutted version of the politics they would claim to defend. Joel Sucher and Steven Fischler's documentary *Anarchism in America* (1981) is one such case. The film compares anarchism to a rugged (and often reactionary) individualism, a "twentieth century Americanism", as the author notes. Bo Widerberg's *Joe Hill* (1971) provides a further example. Porton observes that the film creates "a sentimentalised Joe Hill who is more archetypal folk hero than anarchist or libertarian Marxist [and] avoids the more anarchistic components of Hill's life while emphasising his status as a folksy balladeer". Lizzie Borden's 1983 film *Born in Flames* is proffered as an alternative, for its defence of revolutionary violence and its "disdain for social democracy". Porton recommends its "emphasis on alternative media as a locus of insurrectionary discontent" and claims that "Borden's inventive cinematic style is matched by her resourceful appropriation of important anti authoritarian currents". As someone who thought *Born in Flames* an entirely flawed work (because it reduced its politics to caricature, and, with its focus on affinity groups and an anarcho-feminist Women's Army "set in a not too distant future", fudged the issue of how to portray an insurrectionary politics relevant to the here and now).

I can't share Porton's enthusiasm, nor do I share his belief that Ken Loach's 1995 *Land and Freedom* fails ultimately because it "much too often holds an admirable political stance hostage to wooden dramaturgy". Porton claims that "throughout the film, a tenuous attempt can be discerned to contrast the current climate of political despair with the 1930s arduous, if more optimistic, ideological battles". But it is precisely this attempt to centre the politics of the film, to provide a context for an audience coming to the debates around the Spanish Civil War for the first time, that sets *Land and Freedom* apart from works like *Born in Flames* or Jean Luc Godard's *Tout va Bien*. Porton refers to Godard's "anguished reflexivity" but *Tout va Bien* oozes pseudo radical complacency, so assured of its formal radicalism that it takes form as an end in itself. And there's the rub. Are the only alternatives the 'left nostalgia' which Porton rightly dismisses in *Joe Hill* and *Anarchism in America*, or the experiments with form of *Tout va Bien* and, another Porton recommendation, Brownlow and Mollo's *Winstanley* (1975)? Porton notes favourably the Bakhtinian concept of the work of art as a "cacophony of voices", as a possible means of undermining the notion of authorial supremacy and moving towards a



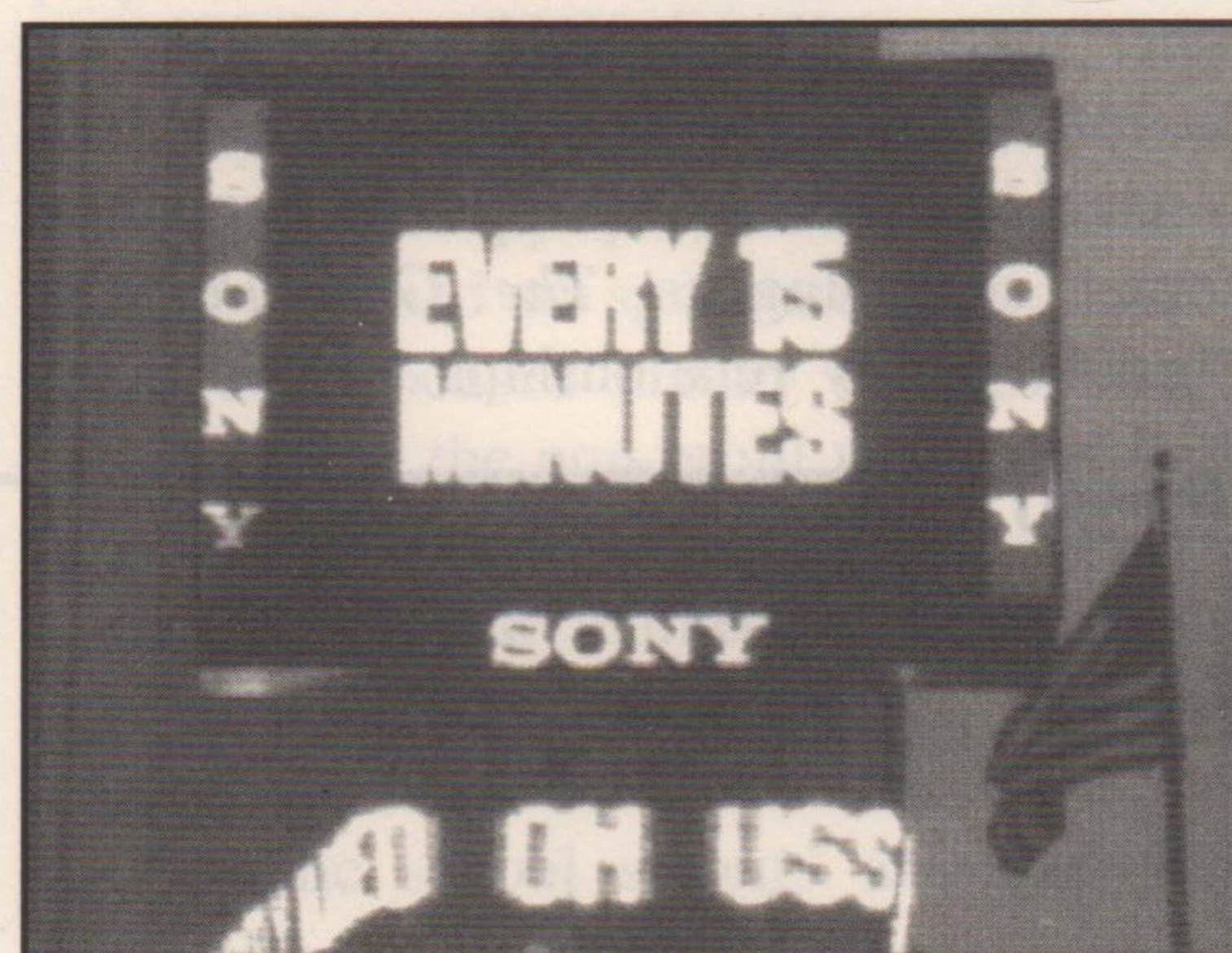
collaborative, collectivist approach to film, but the examples he cites betray only the pretence of such cacophony. Loach at least, made genuine efforts to include a multiplicity of real voices in his film. *Land and Freedom* includes a sequence where villagers debate the merits of agrarian collectivisation. Porton quotes Lisa Berger, a researcher on the film, who was responsible for finding "people who could argue for collectivisation ... others who could be opposed, and others who could see the point, but weren't really convinced, based on real, lived experience working in the countryside". If *Land and Freedom* tries to give voice to lived experience in its fictions, *Tout va Bien* surely does the opposite – attempts to obscure the authorial voice (Godard's) and pass it off as authentic working class experience.

At the root of this is the question of aesthetics. Porton makes this hard to address, by never defining his own political groundings, and never entirely coming clean about his own views on cinema and aesthetics. He tells us that a "monolithic anarchist aesthetic must be dismissed as elusive and dubiously essentialist", and quotes sympathetically Shelley's Romantic anarchism and concern to "champion the resources of creative immanence". Nevertheless, Proudhon, as the book details, adhered to the notion that "a realist aesthetic represents the zenith of artistic achievement" and Bakunin "had little time for Rimbaudian inwardness and aesthetic formulations". Porton claims the Situationist International as "profoundly indebted to anarchism, libertarian Marxism, as well as surrealism", but has to concede that Debord's (awful) *La Societe du Spectacle* (1973) "reveals how his anti-authoritarianism manifested itself in oracular pronouncements that gave this

potted version of his treatise a quasi-authoritarian tenor". (One might note also that Debord's 'anti-authoritarianism' is called into question as much by the bitter personal infighting that wracked the Situationist International, by his general boorishness and his drunken misogyny, as by his 'art', but the notion that aesthetics and practice ought, for revolutionary anarchists at least, to have some connection, appears to be one with which Porton does not wish to address.)

Those anarchists who have engaged with the development of an anarchist aesthetics through film criticism, like Emma Goldman (who attacked movies as the "opium of the masses") or Dwight Macdonald who (to paraphrase Umberto Eco) believed "avant-garde is synonymous with 'high art'", appear to have retreated to the ground occupied also by the likes of Theodor Adorno – cultural elitism disguised as a defence of modernism.

Porton concludes only that it is "difficult to say authoritatively what anarchist plots images and forms are, or should be: they are constantly in flux and subject to revision". All well and good. It is certainly the case that an anarchist politics should seek to defend, as Porton puts it elsewhere, "the full range of aesthetic and political options that Stalinism sought to obliterate". Left as it is, though, this reduces the political struggles around 'culture' to a defence of the avant-garde. That this leads us nowhere is clear enough from the case of Adorno, who railed against jazz and saw Beethoven and Mahler as the aesthetic guardians of the age. 'Culture' is, in its essence, (whether by culture we mean films, books, music) about communication. An anarchist praxis – if anarchism is to mean, as Porton infers, a commitment to "proletarian self emancipation" and not merely Romantic "acts of total insubordination" – has to consider what is communicated, by whom, to whom, and, crucially, who owns the medium of communication. Porton passes up the



opportunity to seriously engage with these issues when he examines, somewhat cursorily, the works produced by the CNT following the collectivisation of the film industry and control of exhibition and distribution. Among the works produced were *Aurora de Esperanza* (1937), charting the political development of an unemployed worker, *Nosotros somos Asi!* (1937), an anarcho-syndicalist musical comedy, and the record of Durutti's funeral, *Entierro de Durutti*. Porton tells us that the CNT's films grew out of an "earnest, if sometimes inept attempt to fuse radical politics with mass entertainment". Inept they may possibly have been, but it's surely the attempt to reach a popular audience with a radical message which is the crux of what's at issue here. Further, does our commitment to artistic revolution preclude, as it does for MacDonald, "any attempt to mediate its results"?

Porton leaves us to conclude that the only options on offer are crude populist nostalgia trips (an anarchist mirror of the arts of the Popular Front period) or the tedious elitism

embodied in the "creative jests" of Craig Baldwin's 1995 *Sonic Outlaws*. Because Porton refuses to take a position himself, the book fails to push any real debate forward, leaving us to conclude that 'anything goes'. He tells us that he does not propose a "Manichean division between 'retrograde' and 'progressive' styles of film making" and contends that he is "chiefly concerned with films that explore and promote anarchist self activity" – but it is here that an otherwise entertaining and well researched work falls on its face. Either there is no such thing as 'anarchist film' except in the widest sense of that "full range of aesthetic and political options" – or there exists the possibility of using film to "promote anarchist self-activity" – and the implication that there ought to be a specific anarchist praxis that engages with this possibility. In the CNT films, in the works of Loach and Jim Allen, I would contend such praxis can be glimpsed. Porton fudges on this, and the book is worse because of it.

In *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Blackwell, 1990) David Harvey considers the films *Bladerunner* (directed by Ridley Scott) and *Wings of Desire* (directed by Wim Wenders). He notes that "Postmodern art forms and cultural artefacts by their very nature must self consciously embrace the problem of image creation, and necessarily turn inwards upon themselves as a result. It then becomes difficult to escape being what is being imaged within the art form itself". It is clear from Harvey's writing that he fears that this may not be an issue simply for that which might be loosely termed the 'post-modern'. What gave rise to such enthusiasm for cinema as a possibly liberating medium at an early stage was the possibilities seemingly offered by its then-new techniques – its new ways of recording motion, of cutting, of montage, of playing with perspective. The problem, as Raymond Williams once dryly noted, is this: "When I was a student it was usual to say that montage and the dialectic were closely related forms of the same revolutionary movement of thought. To be sure that was before we had seen what looked like the same kind of thing done in a thousand films of every conceivable ideological emphasis. That was a period in which it was still widely supposed that the new was inevitably the radical" (*Cinema and Socialism in Politics of Modernity*, Verso). The new, then, is not enough. As Williams notes, with film, we can see how "this new and at first marginal capitalism was, both to develop and to exploit, a genuinely popular medium" (*ibid*). Breaking ground within medium immersed in the logic of capital is only to take part in the production of the next new thing. An anarchist intervention into



cinema then, must surely address this. Harvey contends that the techniques of cinema are such that the very notion of a revolutionary cinema may be unrealisable; "Cinema is after all, the supreme maker and manipulator of images for commercial purposes, and the very act of using it well

(continued on page 5)

Karl Marx

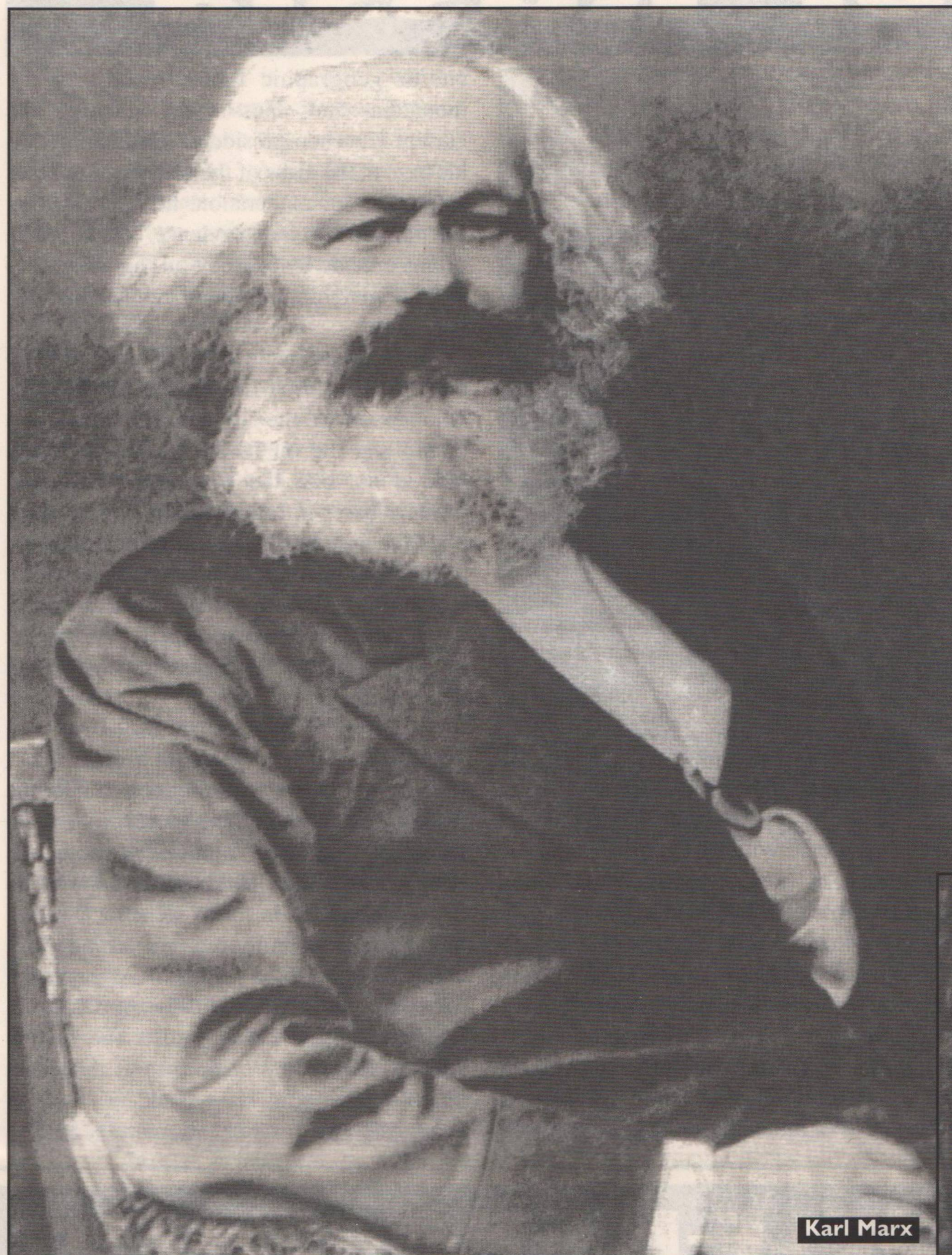
by Francis Wheen

published by Fourth Estate, £20

Among all the ridiculous surveys and polls produced by the media during the approach to the so-called Millennium, the BBC announced a particularly ridiculous one in September which named the thinker of the twentieth century as Karl Marx, although he died in 1883, and despite the existence of more influential thinkers such as Darwin or Einstein or Freud. The justification was of course that Marx – or rather, Marxism, or better still, Marxists – had so much influence on political ideas and actions so long after his death.

This is also the justification for the latest biography of him in English, which begins by claiming that “the history of the twentieth century is Marx’s legacy”, and explaining that “Stalin, Mao, Che, Castro – the icons and masters of the modern age have all presented themselves as his heirs”. It is easy to add several other Marxist monsters, from Lenin and Trotsky to Pol Pot and Mengistu. It is only fair to name some Marxists who have not been monsters, from Liebknecht and Luxemburg to Gramsci and Guerin. It must also be objected that Marxists have had no monopoly of monstrosity. What about Ataturk, Mussolini, Salazar, Hitler, Franco, Peron, Suharto, Qadhafi, Khomeini? And what about other figures who were neither monsters nor Marxists – Gandhi, Roosevelt, Churchill, Nehru, De Gaulle, Sakharov, Havel, Mandela, Aung San Suu Kyi?

This sort of melodramatic speculation is not scholarship but journalism, and the author of this new biography of Marx is not a scholar but a journalist, and a very successful one. Francis Wheen’s previous biography was of Tom Driberg, the Labour politician, compulsive pederast, and informer for both sides in the Cold War. There he was writing within his range of amusing and malicious gossip on current affairs from a position of left-wing comfort. Here he has got out of his depth in taking on someone who, for all his defects both as a person and as a thinker, was a major figure in political and intellectual history. Despite the publisher’s claim that this account of Marx is new and unfamiliar, it actually follows several predecessors, especially in Continental Europe and North America, which have already provided just about all the information on Marx that is ever likely to be discovered. Wheen’s special contribution is to produce a book which is readable and accessible, with witty remarks and topical allusions, and which has received



Karl Marx

wide coverage in the media because of his own background.

The result is a sympathetic but not sycophantic account of Marx’s life and work, which tries to balance the two, though the coverage of the latter is distinctly weaker. Wheen has worked hard, has examined previous biographies and other studies, and has also read the writings of Marx and Engels themselves – in English, that is. He seems not to have much knowledge of German, surely an essential qualification for such work, nor of the left-wing background in Germany, France and Britain. He insists that Marx was a Jew and suggests that he was a ‘self-hating’ Jew; Marx’s ancestors were Jewish, but his father adopted Christianity

before he was born, he was brought up as a Christian, he never had anything to do with Jewish affairs, and his dislike of the place of Jews in the contemporary world was (and is) quite normal among people of Jewish descent who reject Jewish identity. (More significant was his dislike of Slavs and Latins, which Wheen documents but fails to take seriously.)

He follows the solecism of believing that Hegel expressed his dialectic through a sequence of thesis, antithesis, synthesis, although this form of the triad wasn’t actually used by Hegel – or Marx. He ignores several important writings by Marx, especially the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, which wasn’t published during

his lifetime but later became one of his most influential works.

As might be expected, Wheen’s coverage of Marx’s relations with rivals to his left is particularly objectionable. He oddly describes Proudhon as a “libertarian anarchist”, briefly reports their quarrel, but makes no attempt to understand Proudhon’s position. He equally oddly describes Max Stirner as “an anarchic Young Hegelian author”, remarks that “Stirner’s existentialist credo deserved its comeuppance” from Marx, but clearly hasn’t read it. His account of the split in the International amounts to pure caricature, and his account of Bakunin consists of cheap sneers taken directly from Marxist demonology. He doesn’t seem to have bothered to read what Bakunin and his associates actually wrote or to have attempted to understand their criticism of Marx and his associates. No doubt Bakunin had serious defects of both character and ideology, just like Marx, but he was a serious figure in the socialist movement during the late 1860s and early 1870s, and his position was not just frivolous nihilism; it is worth considering why so many members and sections of the International rejected the



Michael Bakunin

Marxist case, and what subsequently happened in the consequent division of the socialist movement into parliamentary, dictatorial and libertarian tendencies. Marx was just as much to blame as Bakunin for what went wrong, and it is a pity to be offered such an absurd version of such an important episode.

Wheen exclaims that “only a fool could hold Marx responsible for the Gulag”. Yes; but only a fool writing about Marx could fail to see that, just as Marx was sometimes remarkably prophetic about the future development of capitalism, Bakunin was also remarkably prophetic about the future development of Marxism. In the end, for all his writings and activities on behalf of the working class, Marx probably did more harm than good; it is surely relevant that almost all regimes which have called themselves Marxist turned out to be at least as bad as those they replaced, that the few which still survive have failed even to feed their subjects, and that almost all Marxist parties reflect the same defects. Wheen fails to make a final judgement on Marx and Marxism, which is in itself a fatal judgement on his book.

(continued from page 4)

always entails reducing the complex stories of daily life to a sequence of images upon a depthless screen”. The way out of this is perhaps to move away from what Harvey identifies as the “condition in which aesthetics predominates over ethics”.

We are back, then, to the Bakhtinian ‘cacophony of voices’. If the best a revolutionary cinema can achieve is to end the predominance of ‘aesthetics over ethics’ in film making then the key to an anarchist praxis might be simply in seeking to allow those normally unheard to speak. Williams talks of a return to cinematic naturalism as one way of doing this: “For the central socialist case, in all matters of culture, is that the lives of the great majority of people have been and still are almost wholly disregarded by most arts. It can be important to contest these selective arts within their own terms, but our central commitment ought always to be those areas of hitherto silent or

fragmented or positively misrepresented experience.” In Ken Loach’s work with Jim Allen, in the works of Alan Clark, in the best work of John Sayles (*Baby It’s You*, for instance) we can begin to see what such a cinema might look like.

The League of Revolutionary Black Workers worked with the New York Newsreel group in 1970 to produce a film about their politics and their interventions in Detroit; *Finally Got the News*. Fusing a montage history of American labour with Detroit music and League leaders talking straight to camera, it’s probably the best contemporary example of a revolutionary group successfully combining ‘aesthetics and ethics’ in that it allows the politics of the group to be forefront without swamping the film as ‘film’. Echoes of *Finally Got the News* can be seen in Paul Schrader’s 1977 film *Blue Collar*, which Schrader calls an exercise in the “politics of resentment”. *Finally Got The News* gets barely a mention

in Porton’s book, but his fascination with “creative jests” gives us pages on Guy Debord and Craig Baldwin.

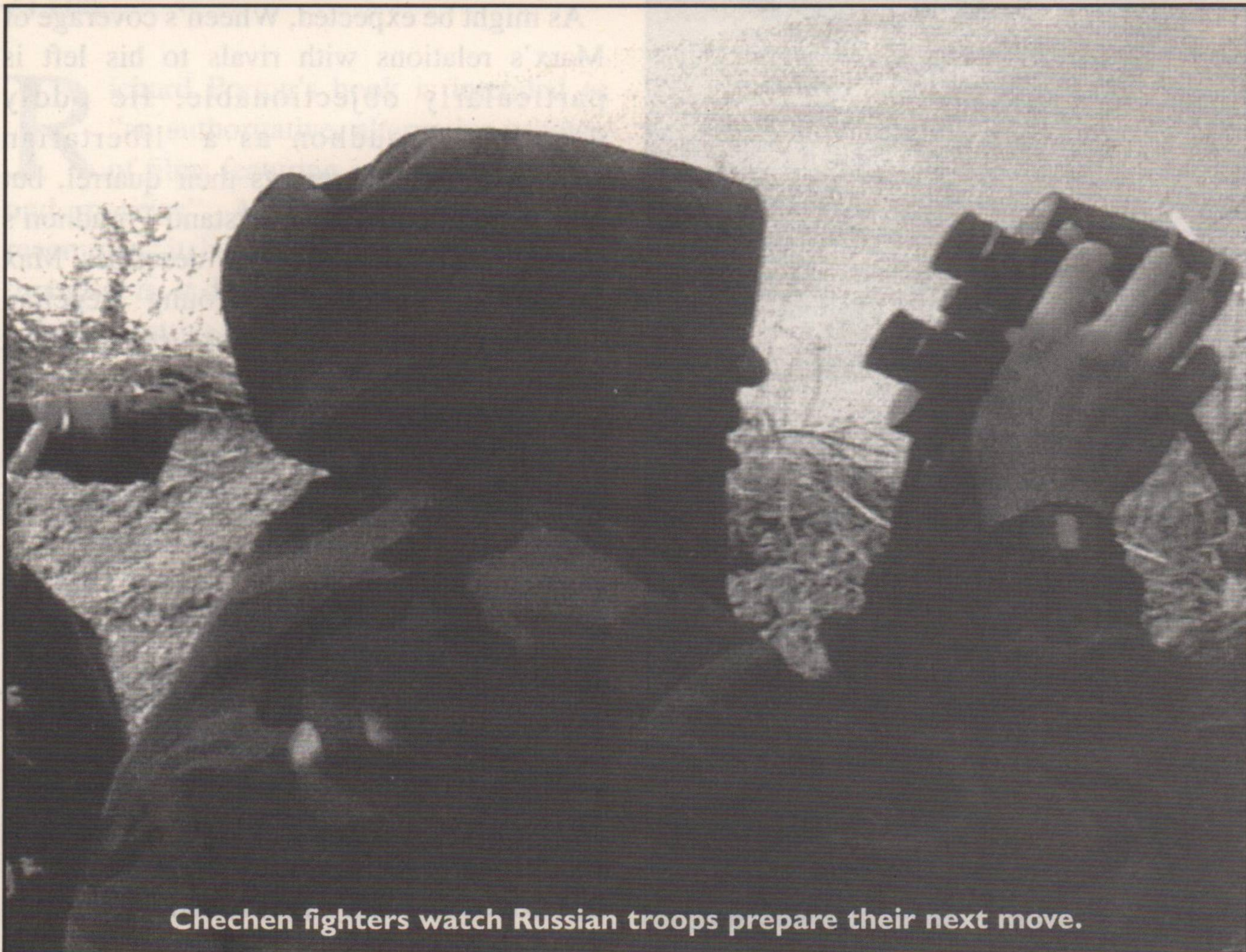
Film and the Anarchist Imagination should be read. It is, as it intends, the first comprehensive survey of anarchism in film. Porton defends ably the anarchist legacy against the distortions of its cinematic portrayals. As a writer, he is lively and informative – and his love of film and his genuine desire to retrieve a lost history of radical film-making leap from the page. Porton argues that “in recent years, certain scholars seem to believe that anarchism is a sub-variety of post-modernism, thereby ignoring more than a hundred years of labour agitation and revolutionary struggles. *Film and the Anarchist Imagination* endeavours to demonstrate how these struggles have been both celebrated and derided by a diverse group of filmmakers.” In this he succeeds, and we should be grateful for that.

Nick S.

NW

— THE CAUCASUS REGION —

Oil for Russia



Chechen fighters watch Russian troops prepare their next move.

For the Russian Federation the question of the provinces is a hard one to resolve. Much of the time they make financial demands on Moscow which, often, are not met. Amongst those regions which give the biggest headaches is the Caucasus region.

Chechens, Ingush and others

The population of the Caucasus region is made up of some thirty distinct nationalities each with its own language, culture and, above all, its own tradition. Stalin, in his time, settled any problems by means of repression – enforcing a regime of silence on these peoples and deporting them to Siberia or Kazakhstan. Yeltsin doesn't have this luxury. However, the politics of the carrot and the stick are still the reality as is demonstrated by the war in Chechnya.

Although it is a somewhat simplistic analysis one might say that, throughout the conflict, the rich have given their support to Moscow whilst the impoverished have sought independence.

Doudayev, the Chechen leader who is now dead, threw in his lot with the independence movement, which won the war but whose measure of success remains hard to determine because, even though the Russian army withdrew from the territory, independence was not achieved.

Let's go back to the conflict. Before the era of *perestroika* the Chechens were part of the Republic of Chechnya-Ingushetia. In 1991 they proclaimed the independent republic of Chechnya and they got themselves a General – in the guise of a President. The same happened in Ingushetia. These President-Generals had the unfortunate tendency to solve problems in a military manner.

Let's remember as well that Chechnya is poorer than Ingushetia. Its economy is founded on transport and oil processing which is effectively under Moscow's control and, more importantly, since 1997, the year Russia signed a treaty with Azerbaidjan, Dagestan and Georgia oil was moved through a pipeline laid in these three territories and which circumvented Chechnya. This upset the Islamics.

The historic destiny of these two peoples, the Chechens and the Ingush, has always been closely linked. But the appartition of two new republics led to tensions. Towards the end of Doudayev's regime the idea of a new country, Ichkeria, came to the fore which would be a sort of Greater Chechnya

and which would swallow up Ingushetia and part of Dagestan. With the death of Doudayev onto this basic idea was grafted the notion of an extremist Islam of a Vakhabist tendency – a seventeenth and eighteenth century ideology of Saudi Arabian origin having common points with Hamas but which neither recognised its prophets nor its saints.

On the other hand the Caucas region has a long tradition of clans which today function on the basis of blood links and also economic

and/or geographic factors (clans in the mountains and clans in the valleys). The current Chechen president, Maskhadov, has his base in the clans of the valley and adheres to a policy of moderation: he is not calling for immediate independence. However, a promise made by Moscow in the autumn of 1996 to give him economic aid has not been kept out.

On the other hand, Ingushetia, since 1996 has not recognised Chechnya. The Islamics who dream of the notion of Ichkeria and controlling the oil in the Caspian Sea and who don't like the presence of Russian military bases in Ingushetia have withdrawn over the last few years into Dagestan and have based their politics on defending the rights of the Akkintsi (a people who are close to the Chechens) and who oppose the current regime in Dagestan by demanding integration with Chechnya.

The clans – a state within a state

In August, armed Chechen groups, under the leadership of Shamil Basayev penetrated into Dagestan aligning themselves with the Akkintsi and other nationalities opposed to the government in order to proclaim an independent Islamic republic somewhat along the lines of the Taliban in Afghanistan.

Russia, called in to help by the Dagestan regime, repelled Basayev after the second attempt. We should emphasise at this point that Basayev's army is not made up simply of volunteers since it can pay recruits \$300 a

month which is a huge salary in the area. Some commentators have also observed that this army has modern equipment – all the latest gadgets from Russian armaments factories. Money is no obstacle for them.

On 15th September the Islamic Liberation Army of Dagestan claimed responsibility for terrorist acts carried out on Russian territory in Moscow, St Petersburg, Volgograd and Bouinaksk. Basayev, at a press conference, condemned these acts, believing that all this would do nothing other than isolate an Islamic state from the world.

Up until the 15th September the Chechen President refrained from any declaration and did not condemn the actions of Basayev. It was only when the Russian army began to bomb Basayev's bases and those of other factions on Chechen territory – destroying fifteen villages, killing some two hundred civilians and sealing off the border – that he organised a non-violent demonstration in Grosny and condemned the provocation of Basayev and Dagestan and suggested Chechnya give help to Russia. However, he also declared he was ready for a Russian attack and that the army had been mobilised.

Russia's Prime Minister Vladimir Putin once again emphasised that Russia should get rid of its guilt complex because it was the victim of attacks.

On 23rd September the Russian army began to bomb Grosny airport after threats from Chechen groups to bomb Moscow.

The socio-economic problems of Russia are once again being resolved with arms and in a violent manner. Corruption is rife throughout the country and is preventing normal functioning.

Alexander (Sacha) Tchoukaev.

(from *Le Monde Libertaire*, 10th October 1999)

SELF-MANAGEMENT FESTIVAL

at Spezzano Albanese in Italy, 19th to 22nd August

For the sixth year in succession the 'self-management festival' has been the headline event in Italy during the month of August after a regional variation on the same theme in the North. This time the festival put down anchor in a small town in Calabre in the South of Italy – a poor region essentially dependent on agriculture.

This choice was not made at random. Since the beginning of the 1990s, in this town of six thousand, a group has come together in a self-managed communalist experiment which today brings together over a hundred folk in the Base Municipal Federation (FMB) and it was this group which took responsibility for the organisation of the festival.

When diversity is quality

The diversity of the people involved and the variety of self-management experiences which they were able to bring to the discussion gave the debates a sense of struggle. Thus the first of the debates entitled, 'defend natural space, defend health' was led – among others – by the 'base committee' which, throughout the peninsular and especially in Toscania, is fighting against incinerators, asbestos and other problems linked to capitalist activity which directly damages health. This might seem a surprising choice for debate since, in France, the libertarian movement does not discuss such issues as a priority – it might even be considered out of bounds and the reserve of the greens – whatever their shade. However there is an anti-capitalist approach to the problem.

The debate which was entitled, 'towards a self-managed economy', took place on the Friday, the second day of the festival, after

many working groups had been set up to propose means to co-ordinate and come up with proposals. Led by members of self-managed agricultural communities which sometimes occupy properties which have been abandoned to speculative investment, the debate focused mainly on agricultural problems and the non-profit trading of their respective produce.

Saturday, which marked a break in the proceedings, saw two debates, the one entitled 'neither church nor state: for a non-state public school system' and the other dealt with 'municipalism: self-management as a communalist practice outside of and opposed to state logic'. Mainly led by Domenico Liguori, one of the activists who helped set up the FMB, it was of great interest to all the activists who attended. Finally, Sunday morning saw the general assembly of the festival where a number of decisions were made and various tools (internet, a web server) were identified to help co-ordinate the movement. Also to be noted was the proposed publication of a 'catalogue of self-management', a brief record of the various self-management experiences, including a history of the various projects and the services they offer and want and which will aim to broaden its appeal by going international. And then in the tradition of any self-respecting festival the rest of the time was joyfully abandoned to wine, song and dance which went on into the small hours of the morning.

Coming together, and the future

Beyond the debates this sixth self-management festival was, for us, an opportunity

for the whole movement to come together. Whether we are speaking of our friends in the Italian Anarchist Federation or the grass roots unions or members of the self-managed agricultural communities or those who help put together anarchist publications the presence of such a diversity of activists and resources within the libertarian movement, Italian or otherwise (there was also a Stockholm presence), this was certainly a stimulant for further efforts of coordination.

Whilst more and more within the framework of the capitalist Europe which is being built the social riches of education, health, transport and retirement which are the object of attacks which risk making it impossible for ordinary people to access such services all the militants on the left seem happy to simply defend the state services. The anarchist response doesn't limit itself to simply keeping in place an unfair status quo but aims to offer as an alternative to the simple dismantlement of such services a collective appropriation by users and workers of these services by means of self-management and federalism – that is to say with neither delegation nor intermediaries. The long years of work carried out by the 'self-management' festivals – this year in Spezzano Albanese – managed to give a concrete reality to the plans to coordinate the different experiments in Italy and thus have helped to launch an embryonic self-managed society. Since self-management must be learnt and since we have never been good at the big picture it remains a project which will spread by example.

Xavier

(from *Le Monde Libertaire*, 22nd September 1999)

Machiavellian calculations

Dear *Freedom*,

Nick S., defending his interpretation of the Kosovan crisis (and probably of all others nowadays) as examples of the success of the US's Machiavellian policies, seems to deny the power of public pressure. If he was watching telly or reading papers he must, like it or not, have noticed the universal indignation, linked with the usual British 'why don't they do something?'. He might also think about the matter of genetically manipulated foods, where the combined propaganda efforts of Monsanto, the US government and the Blair mob have been unable to prevent 90% of the public turning against, and acting against, GM. The efforts of Greenpeace, anarchists and ecological activists, and certain journalists, plus memories of 'mad cows', mobilised public outrage to such an extent that Monsanto is now talking to the Soil Association and sees its shares drooping. The interests of capital are not, of course, driven by any ethic other than profit, but the interests of politicians are driven by the desire to keep voters on their side.

His contempt for the opinions of the actual Kosovans is displeasing. For years Kosovans supported a peaceful solution to their oppression, even setting up an alternative self-run society, and they only supported the KLA as a desperate last resort. Unhappily they proved the historical truism that political notice is only taken of a national injustice when there is a resort to arms (after which there is always the problem of what to do with the freedom fighters and their armaments – though in this case the tide of public horror had begun rising before the KLA, reacting to the same ethnic cleansing,

began to be at all effective and thus give the Serbs the excuse for worse atrocities).

That Kosovans cheered in NATO troops is a fact that Nick S. can't deny. That NATO will frustrate Kosovan desires for independence remains to be seen. Halfbright, the US Secretary of State, is already talking of Kosovan independence, and the KLA has smartly subverted the plan to disarm and emasculate them. In any case, to treat the KLA as the voice of their people is as silly as to treat any army as such a voice. And is NATO so wrong in trying to stop Albanian ethnic cleansing of the remaining Serbs? Serbs are in fact leaving Kosovo in droves and Kosovans will know far better than armchair theorists how to achieve independence, towards which they see NATO/UN occupation as a first step.

Donovan Pedelty has gone into my other point of the Left's inferiority complex *vis-a-vis* the Machiavellian Right, in detail. As he points out, the Clinton administration's approach was so *ad hoc* and fragmentary that it can't even be seen to hang together as a policy. Incidentally, on the matter of the US shackling Euronato of its will, one had to be very glad that the US didn't 'take the lead' over Bosnia – eventually, very eventually, otherwise the Europe of Dr Death and General Rose would never have done anything at all and the Bosnian Muslims would have been eliminated. As I said at the beginning of my previous letter, the determination to see the evil all-powerful US behind every incident in the world – Donovan calls it black and white analysis – makes serious consideration impossible. As anarchists know, the actions and interests of governments of any nation mess up the lives

of their citizens, and if the Kosovan people escape from the clutches of Milosevic they will next have to dodge the political bargainings of their new leaders as well as the fanatic tendencies of 'their' old army. They may do this if the organisational tendencies they showed in creating and running their own schools, etc., (see *Peace News* back numbers) can flourish.

Jonn Roe

Nick S. replies: *Jonn Roe must watch a different television channel to me, because I can't recall any direct action manifestations of public anger over the ethnic cleansing of the Kosova Albanians. The comparison with the anti-GM campaign won't hold. Public opinion 'supported' NATO intervention in the sense that, faced with the media representation of the options as only: 1) doing nothing while the Kosovars were slaughtered, or 2) cheering on 'our boys', public opinion sided with the active option. As any real debate about the United States' manipulation of the diplomatic process leading up to the bombing, and US machinations in the Balkans generally, was stifled I can hardly say the outcome was the product of informed debate.*

Jonn says I have "contempt for the opinions of the actual Kosovars". I actually support the Kosovars' struggle for independence. I just don't accept that NATO are likely to be the best guarantors of Kosova independence, and it is interesting that Jonn hasn't challenged any of the facts I've produced to show that NATO intervention was about: 1) consolidating NATO

expansion under US leadership, and 2) consolidating NATO expansion into Eastern Europe. At the start of the war, Wesley Clarke stated that the escalation of ethnic cleansing following the first bombing raids was "entirely predictable". NATO knew that the vast majority of Kosovar Albanians would be displaced by the war, and it suited their aim of 'regional stability' (through the destabilisation of Milosevic and the subordination of the KLA) to allow the main exodus to take place. As I explained in my reply to Don Pedelty (16th October), the KLA leadership were sufficiently aware of this to try and consolidate their hold on the major towns in Kosova in the vacuum between the departing Serbs and the entrance of K-FOR onto the scene.

It's a strange kind of humanitarianism which bombs civilians in Serbia (two thousand dead at the last count) to deter civilian deaths in Kosova, and a strange kind of radicalism that thinks Serbian lives don't count in the equation.

The main flaw in Jonn's argument is simply this: if the Kosova intervention was a demonstration of a new liberal nationalism, why did the US do nothing to muzzle its clients in East Timor (the US took part in a joint training exercise with Indonesian troops just a week before the 30th August referendum), why does it continue to supply arms to Turkey, and why is it backing the paramilitary death squads in Colombia? If 'humanitarian' concerns appear not to be on the agenda elsewhere, surely it's logical to conclude they only served as a smokescreen in the Balkans?

Y2K a capitalist triumph?

Dear *Freedom* readers,

I thought I may share with you my thoughts on this Millennium nonsense. So much is being made of it that we may think it was something natural, pertaining to the vagaries of the planet, like global warming, or of cosmic significance, like the eclipse. It is thought that it changes the progress of time, with devastating effect on computers, travel, and the value of the dollar.

It is nothing of the kind. The earth keeps turning, the sun rising and setting, the moon waxing and waning, the stars shining when they should be, without even an extra wink. The Millennium is only a date on the Christian calendar commemorating

without any certainty the number of years that have past since the founder of the religion was born.

It affects the whole world because that religion – Christianity – has spread over the world its financial, culture, and its calendar of days and years.

It is otherwise nothing great as millenniums go. The Jews have had six of them. The Buddhists substantially more, and probably the Confucists, Shintoists and Aborigines more still. It is the financial, power and crassly material portent which gives importance to this otherwise insignificant event. It celebrates the success of crass materialism, in direct contradiction to its founder's precept. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth". That, and almost every other aspect of the founder's teaching they have ignored or twisted, in an orgy of lavish expenditure to promote the opposite.

A recent news item told of a giant ferris wheel being assembled on the banks of the Thames, a boy's big Meccano construction, opposite the House of Commons, but they could not get it together, an apt motif of the Chambers on the other side. This toy cost a throw-away thirty million pounds. On the same news item was an assertion that there are half a million children in England living under the poverty line – "Suffer the little children for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven". Not 'suffer the little children as they are the offal of capitalism'.

The Millennium celebrations are an outburst of capitalist triumph. And by that token they sound a note of privileged power, violence, greed, social degradation – and blasphemy.

J.T. Caldwell

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Donald Room

Twenty Year Millennium Wildcat



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Meetings & Events

**The London
Anarchist Forum**

Meet Fridays at about 8pm at Conway Hall,
25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL
(nearest tube Holborn). Admission is free
but a collection is made to cover the cost of
the room.

— PROGRAMME 1999 —

29th October Selfishness as an Ethical
Precept (speaker Donald Room)

5th November General discussion

12th November Symposium on 'Stop the
City'

19th November General discussion

26th November The Charity Organisation
Society and the secret origins of 'The
Welfare State' (speaker Peter Neville)

3rd December General discussion

10th December Discussion on the
programme for the year 2000.

17th December Christmas social

24th and 31st December no meetings

7th January General discussion

Anyone interested in giving a talk or
leading a discussion, please contact Peter
Neville at the meetings giving your subject
and prospective dates and we will do our
best to accommodate.

Amendments to the above programme can
and will be made as changing circumstances
allow, especially within the general
discussion slots. However, bear in mind that
many regular attenders find general
discussion slots a useful way of introducing
matters of some urgency, raising smaller
items which may not merit a symposium
(which is a general discussion on one
particular topic), or in continuing and
amplifying a subject raised in a previous
meeting. Consequently, although we may be
willing to lose a few general discussion
slots, we consider that these do provide an
important vehicle within the context of the
forum.

Peter Neville
for London Anarchist Forum

Red Rambles

A programme of guided walks for Libertarians,
Socialists, Greens, Anarchists and others. Bring
food, drink, suitable footwear and waterproof
clothing. A rota of cars will be used - full cars
will travel to walks.

Sunday 31st October

Vale of Belvoir. Meet at the John Storer House
car park, Wards End, Loughborough, at 10am.
Walk leader Ray.

Sunday 28th November

Derbyshire walk to Alport Heights. Meet at
Wirksworth Market Place at 11am. Walk
leader John.

Sunday 19th December

Woodthorpe, Beacon Hill, Windmill Hill: Meet
at the Crematorium car park at 10am. Walk
leader Mike.

Telephone Vivienne for more info:
01509 230131 or 01509 236028

**I understand that the Cambridge
Anarchist Group is no longer active.**

**If anybody in the area wishes to
make a connection, please contact me
(A. Stone) on Cambridge 328906.**

**What on earth is
humanism?**



For a free information pack and book list
about humanism, or non-religious funerals,
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contact:

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